

# The Arrangements of the Buddha

LOME to the end of another year safe and sound, but some of you who have suffered from the economic downturn, disasters, or illnesses may not be able to sincerely say that you have passed this year without incident. Yet, I think what is important is how we accept a year filled with hardship. The Buddha promises us that as his children, he will surely protect us. Have complete faith in the Buddha's words.

The Buddha always knows the manner of suffering that we encounter, sees how we persevere, and watches over us as we pick ourselves up and get back on our feet. The Buddha has complete faith that we,

his children, have more than enough strength to do so.

Just like a parent who, in order to raise their child to be healthy and strong, provides them with what would seem to contradict that wish, the Buddha gives us exactly what we need most at the moment.

The Japanese word *annon-buji* means that absolutely nothing bad happens; in Buddhist perspective, however, it means you have the strength to overcome whatever transpires. The time will surely come when you realize that the difficult ordeals which give you such strength are the arrangements of the Buddha.

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# Living the Lotus

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Rissho Kosei-kai is a global Buddhist movement of people who strive to apply the teachings of the Threefold Lotus Sutra, one of the foremost Buddhist scriptures, in their daily lives and contribute to world peace. It was founded in 1938 by Rev. Nikkyo Niwano (1906–1999) and Rev. Myoko Naganuma (1889–1957). With the guidance of President Nichiko Niwano, Rissho Kosei-kai members actively share the Dharma widely and engage in peace activities both locally and internationally in cooperation with people from many walks of life.

The title of this newsletter, *Living the Lotus—Buddhism in Everyday Life*, conveys our hope of striving to practice the teachings of the Lotus Sutra in daily life in an imperfect world to enrich and make our lives more worthwhile, like beautiful lotus flowers blooming in a muddy pond. This newsletter aims to help people around the world apply Buddhism more easily in their daily lives.

## President's Message



by Rev. Nichiko Niwano President of Rissho Kosei-kai



### Form Is a Type of Skillful Means

In sports, such as judo and kendo, and in the visual and performing arts as well, the model for physical postures or moves is called "form."

In my understanding, though, form is not limited to these areas, but is evident also in how we comport ourselves in our daily lives.

For example, I think that mastering form is important and that you should make it your routine to be punctual, greet your family members when you get up by saying "good morning," straighten up your shoes when you take them off, and clearly respond "yes" when spoken to, practicing these actions repeatedly in your daily life.

Incidentally, the Japanese word shosa (Sanskrit, kriyā), which is generally translated into English as conduct or behavior, is defined in Buddhism as "the outward appearances of the workings of three things: body, speech, and mind." Simply stated, our deeds and words are some sort of expression of a state of mind.

What, then, is that state of mind? What kind of state of mind is important to master as a form in daily comportment? To start with the answer to that question, it is nothing other than the mind of consideration and compassion for others. By embodying consideration and compassion and putting it into daily practice as our form, the mind of compassion will continue to be even more deeply engraved in our hearts.

In terms of the style and rhythm of life, for those who walk the Buddha Way, putting our hands together in reverence, praying, and offering morning and evening sutra recitation are important examples of form. These practices are also important aspects of diligence through which you yourself demonstrate your feelings of consideration and gratitude and thereby you are becoming a person who always lives life with a mind of consideration and gratitude.

When you have mastered form, then even if your mind is confused for a moment, you can quickly set it right by returning it to the mind of consideration and compassion. In this sense, form can be considered one kind of skillful means, but in fact it is directly linked to the truth that is consideration and compassion.









### Form Is a Practice of Egolessness

When the mind of consideration and compassion becomes the basis of the form of our daily lives, its manifestation in how we act and behave does not seem to depend upon a manual to follow. In this world, no two people are exactly the same, so it is natural that our consideration and compassion toward others will be reflected in many different ways according to each individual. Although we are told that sitting straight with our knees tucked under our torsos is the proper posture for sutra recitation, some people cannot sit in that position without hurting their knees. Of course, such people who do not assume the proper posture are not disregarding form. As the Buddhist phrase "one is all, all is one" conveys, remembering the idea or wish at the basis of our action and behavior is essential.

In this sense, even though there may be as many forms as there are different personalities, any form that is selfish cannot be truly called form. After all, form exists in order to rein in the selfish mind that wants to do whatever it pleases.

Sometimes, for no particular reason, a situation with a family member or acquaintance escalates to the point that you do not want to see that person's face or speak with him or her. With such feelings, if you happen to see that person and your attitude is gruff, it will be unpleasant for both of you. But if, with your mastery of form, you greet that person with your hands joined together reverently and say "good morning," then the ego that made you feel that you do not even want to see that person's face will be cleared away, and you will attain a state of egolessness. That greeting is a step toward restoring harmony and furthermore, the mind of that person you greeted will be gentler than it was if you had not greeted him or her.

When you hear the expression, "formally," you may think it means something unchanging or done by rote, but by keeping to form and doing things correctly without questioning them, we human beings, who are apt to place importance on our own circumstances, can effortlessly, in that moment, become egoless.

In Rissho Kosei-kai, we participate in *hoza* sessions, perform sutra recitation, and practice putting others first. I think that all of theses practices are important examples of form, the continued practice of which will enable us to become people of profound compassion like the Buddha, and that form has supported Rissho Kosei-kai through its history as the "equation of happiness."

From Kosei, December 2017



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# **Spiritual Journey**



# True Compassion That I Learned from Three Ordeals



This Dharma sharing was presented on June 4, 2017, at the ceremony celebrating the completion of the new building for the Sri Lanka Dharma Center and the enshrinement in it of the Gohonzon (a statue of the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni).

GOOD morning, everyone. First of all, I would like to express my sincere congratulations on the inauguration ceremony for the Sri Lanka Dharma Center. My name is Daya Madanayaka. I appreciate this opportunity to share my spiritual experiences.

I was born in the Makura village of Kegalle District, located in southwestern Sri Lanka. My father was a rice farmer, and my mother helped with my fathers' job and cultivated vegetables, including sweet potatoes for home use. As the oldest daughter of Daya family, I have a younger sister and a younger brother. The three of us had grown up together.

In my native village, there were no fences to divide private land, but just big trees to mark each house. I fully enjoyed a variety of ways to play: outings to the riverside; riding a swing; collecting mangoes, cashew nuts, and rambutans; and many others.

In the garden of my house, we made a small shrine on small pillars and enshrined a Buddha statue in it. We picked flowers and offered them to the altar every



Mrs. Daya delivers her Dharma-sharing speech at the inauguration ceremony for the Sri Lanka Dharma Center.

morning and evening. I had grown up in such surroundings, blessed with religion and nature. When I was in the fifth grade of elementary school, I passed the national examination which was conducted all over Sri Lanka, and I got a chance to study at a high-level school.

As a result, I left my home and started to live in a school dormitory. As a mere child I felt so lonely, being apart from my family with whom I had lived together for 11 years, but I gradually got used to living in the dormitory. All the dormitory students recited a sutra every day in front of a Buddha statue installed inside the school, and went to a temple to practice meditation on Vesak and Poson Poya days, which are celebrated according to Buddhist traditions in Sri Lanka. I spent several years in that way, living a life in school. When I was 17 years old, a public official started to work at my school in administration. A little while after graduation, I began going out together with him and got married in 1976 when I was 21 years old.

We lived near my parents' home. My husband worked at the education department of Kegalle District, while I became a housewife. Our life was filled with happiness. In 1977 our first son was born, and next year we moved to Polonnaruwa District for my husband's transference. We started a new life as three family members.

In Polonnaruwa, the first big ordeal awaited us. One day we had a horrible rainstorm late at night. Roof tiles were swept away, and a big mango tree fell down on our house. Inside our house was a terrible mess, and my husband and I got out of the house with my son wrapped in a bed sheet. We could not walk smoothly due to the strong winds, and I crawled

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along, holding my son in my arms. We ran into a bread factory, and found that about 80 evacuees were packed there like sardines. Everyone was wet with rain and there was not enough space to sit down, so we just waited for the storm to pass.

After the sky began growing light next morning, we got out of the factory. My husband and I found our house so terribly destroyed that I could not even identify it. Some people died because they were pinned under the trees that directly fell down on their houses. We possessed nothing except the clothes we were wearing, but I was truly grateful that we were safe with no injuries. My husband and I lost everything, but strived to cooperate together to live.

In 1980, two years after the disaster, when we were on the mend from the damage of the storm, we had the second ordeal. My husband lost his job because he participated in a big demonstration march by public officers. Four days after he lost his job, our second son was born. At that time, only 65 rupees was all the money we had. We could not support our livelihood because we had lived on the monthly income of my husband. We were supported by friends, relatives, acquaintances, and monks. However, as we did not know when my husband could get a job again, we could not depend on their support as long as we liked. So we began doing various jobs to earn money to make a living.

First, we decided to rent two rooms in our house to others. In addition, we started to sell lunch bags, grow and sell vegetables, and keep fowls and sell the eggs. We sometimes went to help farmers to cultivate or harvest rice, and later we would get a portion of the harvest. We worked as hard as we could and tried to get income in various ways. While we lived from hand to mouth, my husband was able to begin working at the secretary's office of Polonnaruwa District. I thought that I should work too, and started working at the same office as my husband. Two years later, our third son was born.

Together, all of our family members were able to overcome these two great hardships, and my husband began to work at a different office due to his promotion. However, after he started commuting to office located far away from our house, his health often turned bad. That is a beginning of the third ordeal.

One day, he fell down with convulsions in his office. After that, he came to have convulsions even when he was sleeping. Due to my husband's illness, our three children and I often suffered financially and psychologically. My husband was likely to express his anger without any reason. He shouted at me and our children, shut us out of the house, and threw out books and clothes for the children while they were studying. He seemed to become another person, but sometimes he behaved in a gentle manner as before; he went out to play with the children, came home with a souvenir, and calmly read books. The rest of us were surprised to see his unusual changes. I could endure the situation, but I understood that it was mentally not good for the children.

I told the children, "All family members should cooperate to solve our problems together"; "All you can do at this moment is to study hard and pass the national examination"; and "I will take care of your father and protect him." My children accepted my words, studied as hard as they could, and passed the examination. I also had a promotion examination in my job and passed it. My husband was getting better little by little. Although I sometimes shed bitter tears I came to feel a sense of relief and security.

In 2000, we had a good time in my parent's home and my husband's parents' celebrating the New Year according to our Sinhalese tradition. After we came back home, my husband had a spasm at midnight and passed away in a hospital. He was 49 years old. After I conducted his memorial service for the third month after his death, the strain made me fall down. Later, I thought of how I should live thereafter, and I was determined not to marry again for my children's sake,

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but to study more for a better job. I started to go to university to pursue a degree.

During my service of nearly 30 years as a public officer, I worked very hard as a mother and a public officer. Meanwhile my children tried their best to study, then they married and had children.

After I retired, I was guided to the faith of Rissho Kosei-kai by Ms. Kusuma, and became a member in 2014. When I visited the Dharma center of Polonnaruwa for the first time, I saw a golden statue of the Buddha, and a gong and a wood block like musical instruments as well. I suspiciously thought to myself, "What kind of facility is this? I may be in a weird place," but I decided to believe Ms. Kusuma, because I knew that she was a reliable person.

As representative of the city government, I had repeatedly participated in its council that was established to protect Theravada Buddhism and the monks in the Polonnaruwa District. So I checked Rissho Kosei-kai of Sri Lanka at the council, and I knew that it is officially registered in the government and observes regulations properly. Rissho Kosei-kai teaches us how we lay Buddhists can sympathize with others' sufferings and how we can work for other's happiness along the bodhisattva way in our daily life. In addition, I learned the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai through seminars in Colombo and Bangkok as well as a booklet of the Dharma center.

Presently I am a leader of a home-based Dharma center, and regularly I hold a *hoza* (Dharma circle) meeting in my home. A lot of people participate in it, including my parents, my sons and their family members, my relatives, neighbors, and so on. Rev. Yamamoto, Dharma center's minister, and Mr. Percy, a chapter leader, visited my house for *hoza*. In *hoza* held in the home-based Dharma center, we learn the following five teachings that we practice in our life: (1) We have a high regard for Buddhist temples and monks; (2) We visit a temple to deepen our faith on the day of full moon; (3) We understand that we are as

one with the Truth; (4) We guide others to the right way by practicing the bodhisattva way; (5) We feel the Life of the Buddha, or the Truth, within ourselves.

Thanks to the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai that I learned, I came to take the three great ordeals in my earlier life as the precious gifts from the Buddha. Further, I could be aware that my life to date was the best for me. That is because many hardships in my life helped me recognize the "benevolence" that leads us to thinking of suffering people, as well as the "compassion" that enables us sympathize with others' pains and sorrows. Thanks to my experiences, I am provided with the wisdom for liberating many people from sufferings.

Today, I would like to pledge myself to do my best for the bodhisattva way so that I can make use of my wisdom to liberate suffering people close to me for the rest of my life. I conclude my speech with words of gratitude to my parents and my awesome children, who were born to me and my husband and had shared sufferings with us. Thank you very much, the Buddha, and everyone.



Mrs. Daya (facing front) shares her experiences in the "three-people hoza."

# Living the LWTUS

The 7 Parables of the Lotus Sutra

The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma

Chapter 3: A Parable

### The Parable of the Burning House

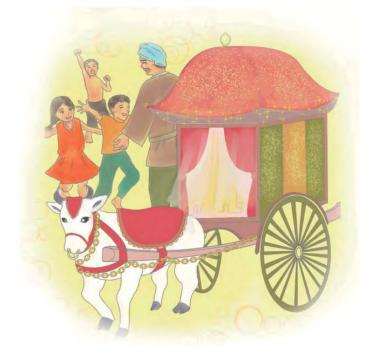
At a certain place there once was a large house of a rich elder. He lived in the house with his children and many servants, but the house was in a state of terrible disrepair. One day, fire suddenly broke out in the house. The elder's children were playing inside without noticing the fire. The elder who was outside the house hurriedly returned and warned his children in a loud voice that fire had broken out, but the children were totally absorbed in their play and didn't notice their father's loud cry.



All the children finally came out of the burning house on their own, through the single narrow gate. The elder was very happy to see that all children were safe. The children pestered him: "Father, please give us the goat, deer, and ox carts that you promised us!" The elder responded to their requests by giving all of his children equally a great, white ox cart, which was far more splendid than any of the three carts he had originally promised.



At first the elder thought that he would put his children on a table and bring them out. But on second thought, he realized that some of his children might fall off on the way. So he explained to his children the horror of fire and tried to make them realize the danger, but they did not take heed of the elder's warnings. Then he finally had this idea: "I will have to use some kind of skillful means to save them." He called out to his children that goat carts, deer carts, and ox carts, all of which the children would love to play with, were waiting for them outside.



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### Commentary

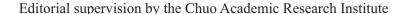
The elder in this story corresponds to the Buddha, and his children to us. The dilapidated house indicates the precarious state of the world that we live in. The fire that breaks out there symbolizes all human sufferings. These sufferings will befall all of us sooner or later, but we are unaware of them and engrossed in our own desires.

The Buddha wishes to deliver us out of the burning house single-mindedly. The house has only one gate, and it is very narrow. In order to get out of the house, we ourselves must realize the wish of the Buddha and go through the narrow gate on our own. If the Buddha hauls us on a table out of the burning house, unless we are aware of our own sufferings, there always is a danger that we might lose our grip on the compassionate hand of the Buddha, which is reaching out to us. The Buddha is trying to make us realize our sufferings, but we are unaware of it. Occasionally we glance at the Buddha's face, but we do not try to listen to the Buddha's teachings seriously.

Finally, as a last resort, the Buddha shows us the goat carts, deer carts, and ox carts. Hearing the Buddha tell us that we can choose any of the teachings symbolized by the three carts, which fits our characters, we finally begin to take an interest in the Buddha's teachings.

Having run out of the burning house by our own will means that we voluntarily practiced the Buddha's teachings. However, we do not yet realize our liberation from the burning house. Our minds are totally occupied by an earthly desire to obtain one of the carts we asked for. Yet when we expressed our earnest desire to the Buddha, unexpectedly all of us were given a great white ox cart—the supreme awakening—equally. It means that everyone can attain the Buddha's awakening by accumulating the practice that suits each individual.

The Buddha is always concerned about us as his beloved children and is trying to liberate us from sufferings. Actually, our world is filled with sufferings just like the burning house. The Buddha jumped into the burning house and has been showing us the way that all of us can attain buddhahood together.





# **Special Column**



### Deepest Thanks for the Last Six Years

AM sad to say that I will leave the current position as director of Rissho Kosei-kai International (RKI), due to the age limit system of managerial personnel at Rissho Kosei-kai headquarters. I would like to express my deepest appreciation to every one of you for your valuable support during the last six years. I was very happy in all these years. I will never forget all the heart-touching memories of meeting with you and sharing the joy of the Dharma with you in various parts of the world.

At this time, I have been assigned as director of South Asia Dissemination Region as well as minister of Rissho Kosei-kai Bangkok. As you all agree, Rissho Kosei-kai's teaching is truly invaluable and wonderful. At the new place, I would like to share this wonderful teaching with as many people as possible. How exciting it is!

The new director of the RKI is Rev. Koichi Saito. He is one of my closest friends and is an outstanding minister. For the last twenty years, he has been serving as minister at several Dharma centers inside and outside of Japan, including one in New York. He is big in both body and heart. I am very sure that the teaching will be spreading further and wider under his leadership.

Everyone, please take good care of yourself. And let us share the joy of the Dharma with as many people as possible as long as we are alive. Finally, I would like to repeat, "Thank you all very much!"

Rev. Shoko Mizutani



Rev. Saito (left) and Rev. Mizutani (right)

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Brief biography: Rev. Koichi Saito was born in 1957 in Tokyo. After graduating from Gakurin Seminary of Rissho Kosei-kai in 1982, he worked at Religions for Peace Japan secretariat, then joined Rissho Kosei-kai's headquarters and engaged in interreligious cooperation and peace activities for twelve years. He also worked at the secretariat of the International Association for Religious Freedom in Frankfurt during those days. Since 1998 he has worked for Dharma dissemination as division director and minister in several places in and outside of Japan.

### Hello! I'm Looking Forward to Working with You!

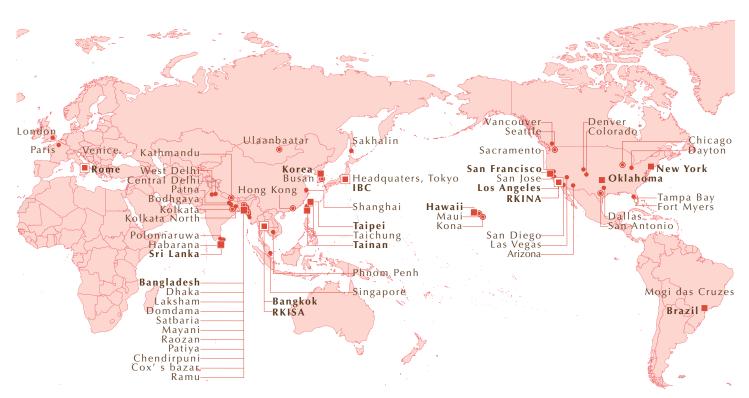
AM Koichi Saito. I started working as the director of Rissho Koseikai International on December 1. I am the father of Yusuke Saito, who served as a staff member of Rissho Kosei-kai International until the end of November. It is a great pleasure for me to have this opportunity to work for the overseas Dharma dissemination.

I had been working for interfaith dialogue and cooperation for sixteen years, before I served as the minister of the Dharma centers in Suibara in Niigata Prefecture (the present Shibata Dharma Center), New York, Sumida in Tokyo, and Hiroshima. The nineteen years in the ministry were also the time for me to pray for the repose of the spirits of the victims of war and terrorism, and to appreciate anew the value of peace.

Since I was appointed to the role to disseminate the Dharma world-wide, I would like to take every step forward to help disseminate the Lotus Sutra throughout the world. It is a divine mission, with which Rissho Kosei-kai was entrusted through the virtue of the Founder.

Let us walk forward together toward cultivating human resources suitable for the coming age, that is, to raise bodhisattvas all over the world, which is a sacred mission for Rissho Kosei-kai!

> Rev. Koichi Saito Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International



RISSHO KOSEI-KAI INTERNATIONAL BRANCHES 🖜

LIVING THE LOTUS DECEMBER 2017

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# 2017

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